

HUMAN ETHOLOGY NEWSLETTER No. 11

November 1975

(Financial reasons caused us to eliminate the Sept. issue.)

### Upcoming Meetings

The American Anthropological Association's annual meeting will be Dec. 2-6 in San Francisco. Drs. Jerome Barkow (Dalhousie) and Liz Vaitl (UCLA) have organized a symposium on Biosocial Anthropology. In addition Dr. Barkow has arranged for a room where those researchers interested in developing an evolutionary perspective on human behavior can meet to exchange ideas.

Place: Green Room, Fairmount Hotel

Time: Thursday, Dec. 4, 5-7 p.m.

Hope to see you there.

The next International Human Ethology Workshop will be held in the summer of 1977, shortly preceding the International Ethology meeting. Laura Benigni has volunteered to host the meeting and is arranging for a site in Italy.

The next North American meeting of Human Ethologists will again be held together with the Animal Behavior Society at their annual meeting. This year it will be in Boulder, Colorado at the University of Colorado on June 20-25, 1976. A transmittal form for paper abstracts is attached. At the request of the ABS we will integrate our session with theirs by reading our papers co-mingled with those of other species, as arranged according to topics (e.g., aggression, territoriality, etc.). These papers are 20 minutes in length. The ABS also has 'mini-paper' sessions (5 minute papers) where new ideas, research in progress, new developments that do not constitute an entire paper, etc., can be presented. Mini-papers are submitted by title only. The final date for submission of abstracts is March 1, 1976. Your abstract should be organized as follows:

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1. A sentence stating the specific objective(s) of the study unless indicated by the title.
2. A brief description of methods, if pertinent.
3. A summary of the results obtained.
4. A statement of conclusions.

Abstracts should be typed on plain white 8½ x 11 paper separate from the transmittal form. The text of the abstract should be double spaced. See following sample for style to be used in typing abstract.

## PREDATOR RECOGNITION AND MOBBING BEHAVIOR OF BARN SWALLOWS (*Hirundo rustica*)

V. L. Smith and U. R. Gravens Pennsylvania State University

Mobbing is a type of anti-predator behavior that barn swallows and many other bird species commonly exhibit toward predators . . . . .

Because some set of H.E. papers will deal with language, culture, etc. there will also be a separate H. Sap. paper session. In addition, we hope to have two workshop sessions dealing with aspects of evolutionary theory as directly applicable

to human ethological research. As noted below (see comments), and as evident at past meetings, most of the human ethological research to date has focused upon ontogenetic factors, and the subjects have generally been within a relatively narrow age range (0-5 years). The steering committee working on next years meeting would like to broaden this perspective. Comments are always appreciated.

Past Meetings

The 3rd International Workshop was held in Sheffield, England, with Peter Smith serving as an excellent host. Fortunately (as it turned out) the new Psychology Building at the University of Sheffield was not finished. This meant that all of the activities took place within the dormitory block. Consequently, there was a much greater opportunity for meeting and discussing with others. Approximately 130 people attended (from 12 countries). This was almost twice the size of the previous meeting. We would especially like to thank those who presented papers, gave invited talks, and led the workshop sessions.

The workshops are probably the most valuable portions of these meetings in terms of the exchange and modification of ideas. At the same time it is difficult to guarantee that they will be successful (e.g. leaderless workshops tend to be as disasterous as workshops dominated by one individual). A steering committee will attempt to develop a couple of workshops for the next ABS meeting and hopefully these can serve as models for future meetings.

Journals

Discussion about a Human Ethology journal continued at the Sheffield meeting. At least one English and one American publisher are interested in supporting (through editorial costs, etc.) the establishment of such a journal. Other publishers will be approached. A prime concern expressed by many of those at the meeting was the current depressed state of the economy (for example, the University of Illinois, with one of the largest university libraries in the U.S. will add virtually no new journals in the next few years). Of great importance, then, would be the length of time which a publisher will support a new journal so that it can become established. At least three new 'ethology' journals will start in the next year or two (one each in Belgium, France and Germany) so apparently some publishers are willing to provide continuing support. More on this later.

Two additional journals which appear to accept articles about human behavior as affected by evolutionary factors are:

- (1) Current Anthropology, edited by C. S. Belshaw, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B. C., Canada V6T 1W5.
- (2) American Anthropologist, edited by R. B. Woodbury, Machmer Hall, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts 01002, U.S.A.

One new journal which definitely will accept articles on human ethology and socio-biology is Political Anthropology. For information write to:

Dr. Henry Beck, Associate Editor  
Political Anthropology  
School of Social Sciences  
University of California  
Irvine, California 92664

Michael Argyle (who has two recent books: Argyle, M. Bodily Communication, London: Methuen, and Argyle, M. and Cook, M. Gaze and Mutual Gaze, Cambridge University Press) mentions two other journals publishing in this field:

(1) Journal of Nonverbal Behavior, edited by R. M. Lee, Department of Psychology, Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut 26106 U.S.A. and

(2) Journal of Human Movement Studies, edited by Dr. and Mrs. H.T.A. Whiting, Department of Physical Education, University of Leeds, Leeds, England.

#### References

A bibliography of human communicational behavior through 1972/73 has been compiled by Dr. T. M. Ciolek (Australian National University, Box 4, P.O., Canberra, A.C.T. 2600, Australia) and appears in the journal Sign Language Studies, Linstok Press, Silver Spring, Maryland 20901 U.S.A. Note: Ciolek has NO copies.

#### Erratum

The title of Barbara Hold's paper presented in Sheffield was missing from H.E.N. No. 10. It is "Rank specific behavior in pre-school children."

#### Books in Progress

Gordon Burghardt (Department of Psychology, 8 Ayres Hall, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee 37916, U.S.A.) is working on a book with the tentative title of "Ethological Roots of the Behavioral Sciences." He would appreciate receiving published and unpublished articles and will appropriately credit all information.

Omark and Marvin mentioned at past meetings that they were working on a book "Advances in Human Etiology." Originally this was planned to be a publication of the papers presented at the various meetings. The original plan has changed because a strong need seems to exist for theoretical and methodological statements about human ethology. However, included in the book will be an annotated bibliography of research on humans from an ethological perspective. Dr. Cheryl Travis (University Of Tennessee) is also working on this bibliography. We would appreciate receiving articles and will attempt to include all of them in the bibliography. Please send them to Don Omark (address below) and I will pass them on to the appropriate reviewer. Thanks.

Comments on Human Ethology: Definitions and Scope. By Peter K. Smith, University of Sheffield, England.

Much of the discussion so far in H.E.N. (nos. 6, 8, 9) has concerned defining criteria of Human Ethology. It seems clear from this, and from the Sheffield workshop, that there are two main strands to human ethology. One strand, "observation of behaviour in natural environments", has less support as a defining characteristic but has contributed much of the research to date. The other strand, "an evolutionary perspective on human behaviour", has increasing support as a defining characteristic but is still only evidenced in a minority of reports.

These two strands are related in that observation in natural environments seems a very powerful tool for examination of the adaptive significance of behaviour and clearly the four 'whys' (causation, function, ontogeny and phylogeny) embrace the two approaches. The two strands are separated by the history of different disciplines, and I suspect will tend to stay largely separated because one strand is basically concerned with behaviour now and mechanisms of development, while the other is basically concerned with the history (biological and cultural) of how these

mechanisms evolved. (See also pp. 322-324 in Burton Jones' Ethological Studies of Child Behaviour).

If Human Ethology is defined as the second alternative, then it becomes the study of human evolution, and chances to make links with ontogenetic studies are weakened. It can, of course, include both strands (in particular, I think, Human Ethology can usefully focus on the adaptiveness of present behaviour patterns in contemporary environments). However, if we embrace the four 'whys' (as Grant and Collis suggest) then the problem of scope becomes paramount, as then Human Ethology includes all of psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, linguistics, and much else besides! (if we take the definition seriously - and aren't we meant to?).

From a de facto viewpoint, observational - ethological studies have indeed been largely limited to social behaviour and NVC, but this is scarcely satisfactory. What about (1) observational studies of child language (2) observational studies of motor skill development (3) study of self-reports ("ethogeny" - Harre & Secord 1972) Language, tool manufacture/use, and conscious communication of experience are highly distinctive of our species, but are these kinds of investigations considered as 'human ethology'? It may be a bit too facile to say 'if they have an evolutionary perspective' (unless we really wish to exclude causation/ontogeny research). Most researchers can't competently answer all questions at once, and it would be all too easy to tack on some evolutionary speculation at the end of some ontogenetic research without this being very worthwhile.

I'm not sure what the answer is to these problems, but I think it is important for (1) the self-identification of researchers as human ethologists or not, (2) the scope of a possible journal, and (3) our relations with other disciplines and the way research develops.

Defining Human Ethology by Usher Fleising, University of Calgary, CANADA.

Although I considered the human ethology workshop at Sheffield a great success I did come away rather puzzled as to whether or not a human ethology discipline actually exists. It was conceded by a number of people that the majority of research papers presented and discussed were better suited for a meeting of developmental psychologists. This means either that people doing human ethology as it has been defined in H.E.N. No. 6 were not present at Sheffield or else human ethology is not being done.

The question appears to be whether or not the use of the methods developed by ethologists for studying human behavior is a sufficient condition for labeling a piece of work as human ethology? Judging from the statements in H.E.N. No. 6 it is not. I would not label John Whiting or Beatrice Whiting as human ethologists yet their methods of observation are ethological (1970 in Naroll and Cohen); the same is true for Barker (1954, Midwest: Its Children).

It has been repeatedly emphasized that the distinguishing characteristic of human ethology is reliance upon the theory of evolution as an explanatory device. But this in itself is not enough, for in order to apply the theory one must have the material to which the theory can be suitably applied.

The distinguishing characteristic of Darwin's work was his careful use of cross-specific data. Ghiselin (1969, Triumph of the Darwinian Method) stresses that one of Darwin's chief contributions to biology was the implementation of the comparative method. Darwin spent 8 years on a comparative study of barnacles, according to Ghiselin, this more than anything else solidified his ideas about natural selection.